



MyPyramid: Steps To A Healthier You

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MyPyramid: One size doesn't fit all



MyPyramid.gov
STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOU

USDA's MyPyramid is a personal approach to healthy eating and physical activity. The symbol reminds people to make healthy food choices and to be active every day. The different parts of the symbol are described below.

- **Personalization** is shown by the person on the steps and the slogan "MyPyramid."
- **Variety** is shown by the six color bands. Each band stands for one of the five MyPyramid food groups and oils. The orange band stands for the grains group. The green band is the vegetable group. The fruit group is shown by the red band. The blue band stands for the milk group. The meat and beans group is shown by the purple band. Oils are the yellow band. This shows that foods from all food groups are needed each day for good health.
- **Proportion** is shown by the different widths of the food group bands. The widths suggest how much food you should choose from each food group. The widths are just a general guide. You can find the kinds of amounts of food you need to eat each day at www.mypyramid.gov.

- **Moderation** is shown by the food group bands getting smaller from the bottom to the top. The wider bottom stands for foods with little or no solid fats or added sugars. These should be chosen more often. The smaller top stands for foods containing more added sugars and solid fats. These foods should be chosen less often. The more active you are, the more of these foods can fit into your diet.
- **Activity** is shown by the person climbing the steps. This shows the importance of being physically active every day.
- **Gradual Improvement** is shown by the slogan, "Steps to a Healthier You." This shows you can benefit from taking small steps to improve your diet and lifestyle each day.

MyPyramid food groups

The MyPyramid food groups include:

Grain Group

Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another cereal grain is part of this group. Grains are sorted into two subgroups:

- Whole grains and
- Refined grains

At least half of all the grains eaten daily should be whole grains.

Vegetable Group

Any vegetable or 100% vegetable juice is part of this group. Vegetables are sorted into five subgroups based on the nutrients they contain. Examples of vegetables from each subgroup are shown below.

- Dark green vegetables
Broccoli
Romaine lettuce
- Orange vegetables
Carrots
Butter-nut squash

MyPyramid Food Intake Pattern Calorie Levels

MyPyramid assigns Individuals to a calorie level based on their sex, age, and activity level.

The chart below identifies the calorie levels for males and females by age and activity level. Calorie levels are provided for each year of childhood, from 2-18 years, and for adults in 5-year increments.

MALES				FEMALES			
Activity level AGE	Sedentary*	Mod. active*	Active*	Activity level AGE	Sedentary*	Mod. active*	Active*
2	1000	1000	1000	2	1000	1000	1000
3	1000	1400	1400	3	1000	1200	1400
4	1200	1400	1600	4	1200	1400	1400
5	1200	1400	1600	5	1200	1400	1600
6	1400	1600	1800	6	1200	1400	1600
7	1400	1600	1800	7	1200	1600	1800
8	1400	1600	2000	8	1400	1600	1800
9	1600	1800	2000	9	1400	1600	1800
10	1600	1800	2200	10	1400	1800	2000
11	1800	2000	2200	11	1600	1800	2000
12	1800	2200	2400	12	1600	2000	2200
13	2000	2200	2600	13	1600	2000	2200
14	2000	2400	2800	14	1800	2000	2400
15	2200	2600	3000	15	1800	2000	2400
16	2400	2800	3200	16	1800	2000	2400
17	2400	2800	3200	17	1800	2000	2400
18	2400	2800	3200	18	1800	2000	2400
19-20	2600	2800	3000	19-20	2000	2200	2400
21-25	2400	2800	3000	21-25	2000	2200	2400
26-30	2400	2600	3000	26-30	1800	2000	2400
31-35	2400	2600	3000	31-35	1800	2000	2200
36-40	2400	2600	2800	36-40	1800	2000	2200
41-45	2200	2600	2800	41-45	1800	2000	2200
46-50	2200	2400	2800	46-50	1800	2000	2200
51-55	2200	2400	2800	51-55	1600	1800	2200
56-60	2200	2400	2600	56-60	1600	1800	2200
61-65	2000	2400	2600	61-65	1600	1800	2000
66-70	2000	2200	2600	66-70	1600	1800	2000
71-75	2000	2200	2600	71-75	1600	1800	2000
76 and up	2000	2200	2400	76 and up	1600	1800	2000

*Calorie levels are based on the Estimated Energy Requirements (EER) and activity levels from the Institute of Medicine Dietary Reference Intakes Macronutrients Report, 2002.

SEDENTARY = less than 30 minutes a day of moderate physical activity in addition to daily activities.
MOD. ACTIVE = at least 30 minutes up to 60 minutes a day of moderate physical activity in addition to daily activities.
ACTIVE = 60 or more minutes a day of moderate physical activity in addition to daily activities.

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- Dry beans and peas
 - Black beans
 - Snow peas
- Starchy vegetables
 - Corn
 - Potatoes
- Other vegetables
 - Peppers
 - Cucumber

You should choose vegetables from each of the subgroups. You do not need to eat vegetables from each subgroup each day. Over a week’s time you need to eat vegetables from as many of the five subgroups as you can to get the most nutrients.

Fruit Group

Any fruit or 100% fruit juice is part of this group. Most fruit group choices should be without added sugar.

Milk Group

All fluid milk products and many foods made from milk are part of this food group.

Foods made from milk that keep their calcium content are part of this group. Foods made from milk with little or no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream, and butter, are not part this group.

Most milk group choices should be fat-free or low-fat.

Meat and Beans Group

All foods made from meat, poultry, fish, dry beans or peas, eggs, nuts, and seeds are part of this group. Dry beans and peas are part of this group **and** the vegetable group.

Most meat and poultry choices should be lean or low-fat. Fish, nuts, and seeds contain healthy oils. Choose these foods more often.

Oils

Oils are fats that are liquid at room temperature. Oils come from many plants and from fish. Some common oils are canola oil, corn oil, cottonseed oil, olive oil, safflower oil, soybean oil, and sunflower oil.

Many foods are naturally high in oils, like nuts, olives, some fish, and avocados. Foods that are mainly oil include mayonnaise, certain salad dressings, and soft (tub or squeeze) margarine with no trans fats.

Most oils are high in monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats, and low in saturated fats. Most of the fats you eat should be polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fats. While some oil is needed for health, oils still contain calories.

A few plant oils, including coconut oil and palm kernel oil, are high in saturated fats. For nutritional reasons these should be considered as solid fats.

Solid fats contain more saturated fats and/or trans fats than oils. Saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol tend to raise “bad” (LDL) cholesterol levels in the blood. High LDL levels can raise the risk for heart disease.

Solid fats are not counted as oils. Solid fats are counted as discretionary calories which are discussed later.

How Much is Needed Daily from Each MyPyramid Food Group?

The amount you need to eat from each MyPyramid food group daily depends on your gender, age, and level of physical activity.

Recommended amounts from each MyPyramid food group each day for a reference 2,000 calories are:

- 6 oz. of grains
- 2.5 cups of vegetables
- 2 cups of fruit
- 3 cups of milk
- 5.5 oz of meat and beans
- 6 teaspoons of oil

For personalized nutritional recommendations go to www.mypyramid.gov.

What Counts from Each MyPyramid Food Group?

In general, a 1-ounce equivalent from the grains group is:

- 1 slice of bread
- 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal
- 1/2 cup of cooked rice, cooked pasta, or cooked cereal

In general, one cup from the vegetable group is:

- 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice
- 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup from the vegetable group

In general, one cup from the fruit group is:

- 1 cup of fruit or 100% fruit juice
- 1/2 cup of dried fruit

In general, one cup from the milk group is:

- 1 cup of milk or yogurt
- 1 1/2 ounces of natural cheese
- 2 ounces of processed cheese

In general, a 1-ounce equivalent from the meat and beans group is:

- 1 ounce of meat, poultry, or fish
- 1/4 cup dry beans, cooked
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon of peanut butter
- 1/2 ounce of nuts or seeds

Discretionary Calories

Discretionary calories are part of your total estimated calorie needs, not extra calories in addition to your total calorie needs.

Each person’s estimated calorie needs can be divided into “essentials” and “extras.”

The “essential” calories are the calories you need for the amount of food from each MyPyramid food group and oils.

If you choose the lowest fat and no-sugar-added forms of food from each food group the remaining calories can be used for other things. These are your discretionary calories.

The discretionary calories can be used for “extras” like solid fats, added sugars, and alcohol, or more food from any food group.

MyPyramid

Food Intake Patterns

The suggested amounts of food to consume from the basic food groups, subgroups, and oils to meet recommended nutrient intakes at 12 different calorie levels. Nutrient and energy contributions from each group are calculated according to the nutrient-dense forms of foods in each group (e.g., lean meats and fat-free milk). The table also shows the discretionary calorie allowance that can be accommodated within each calorie level, in addition to the suggested amounts of nutrient-dense forms of foods in each group. Following is the suggested types of vegetables per week to meet the recommended nutrient intakes for the calorie levels. See page 4 to determine the calorie intake that best fits your age and lifestyle.

Daily Amount of Food From Each Group

Calorie Level	1,000	1,200	1,400	1,600	1,800	2,000	2,200	2,400	2,600	2,800	3,000	3,200
Fruits	1 cup	1 cup	1.5 cups	1.5 cups	1.5 cups	2 cups	2 cups	2 cups	2 cups	2.5 cups	2.5 cups	2.5 cups
Vegetables	1 cup	1.5 cups	1.5 cups	2 cups	2.5 cups	2.5 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3.5 cups	3.5 cups	4 cups	4 cups
Grains	3 oz-eq	4 oz-eq	5 oz-eq	5 oz-eq	6 oz-eq	6 oz-eq	7 oz-eq	8 oz-eq	9 oz-eq	10 oz-eq	10 oz-eq	10 oz-eq
Meat and Beans	2 oz-eq	3 oz-eq	4 oz-eq	5 oz-eq	5 oz-eq	5.5 oz-eq	6 oz-eq	6.5 oz-eq	6.5 oz-eq	7 oz-eq	7 oz-eq	7 oz-eq
Milk	2 cups	2 cups	2 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups	3 cups
Oils	3 tsp	4 tsp	4 tsp	5 tsp	5 tsp	6 tsp	6 tsp	7 tsp	8 tsp	8 tsp	10 tsp	11 tsp
Discretionary calorie allowance	165	171	171	132	195	267	290	362	410	426	512	648

Vegetable Subgroup Amounts are Per Week

Calorie Level	1,000	1,200	1,400	1,600	1,800	2,000	2,200	2,400	2,600	2,800	3,000	3,200
Dark green veg.	1 c/wk	1.5 c/wk	1.5 c/wk	2 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk
Orange veg.	.5 c/wk	1 c/wk	1 c/wk	1.5 c/wk	2 c/wk	2 c/wk	2 c/wk	2 c/wk	2.5 c/wk	2.5 c/wk	2.5 c/wk	2.5 c/wk
Legumes	.5 c/wk	1 c/wk	1 c/wk	2.5 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	3.5 c/wk	3.5 c/wk	3.5 c/wk	3.5 c/wk
Starchy veg.	1.5 c/wk	2.5 c/wk	2.5 c/wk	2.5 c/wk	3 c/wk	3 c/wk	6 c/wk	6 c/wk	7 c/wk	7 c/wk	9 c/wk	9 c/wk
Other veg.	3.5 c/wk	4.5 c/wk	4.5 c/wk	5.5 c/wk	6.5 c/wk	6.5 c/wk	7 c/wk	7 c/wk	8.5 c/wk	8.5 c/wk	10 c/wk	10 c/wk

For example discretionary calories can be used to:

- Eat more foods from any food group the MyPyramid recommends.
- Eat higher calorie forms of foods—those that contain solid fats or added sugars. Examples are whole milk, cheese, sausage, biscuits, sweetened cereal, and sweetened yogurt.
- Add fats or sweeteners to foods. Examples are sauces, salad dressings, sugar, syrup, and butter.
- Eat or drink items that are mostly fats, caloric sweeteners, and/or alcohol, such as candy, soda, wine, and beer.

Most discretionary calorie allowances are very small, between 100 and 300 calories, especially for those who are not physically active.

For many people, discretionary calories are used by the foods they choose in each food group.

Physical activity increases calorie needs. If you are more physically active, you have more total calories and more discretionary calories.

References

United States Department of Agriculture. MyPyramid: Steps to a Healthier You. Accessed at www.mypyramid.gov